

**Re: Sentencing hearing for Pete Seda reminder**

**Charu Colorado** to: Joseph\_Lee

11/20/2010 07:20 PM

Cc  
: Charu Colorado

Dear Joseph, During the many years Peta Seda resided in this community I had several occasions to speak to him and observe his attitudes and behavior. I never saw any sign or reason to think he was a person who could or would support any kind of violence or terrorism. Just the opposite. he always seemed to want to come together with anyone who was different in background and had a peaceful compassionate attitude toward settling differences. He in fact impressed me as a person who was always searching for peaceful resolutions to world problems.

After reading about the kinds of evidence in this case in the newspaper yesterday re phone calls etc. to the persons in charge of sending funds abroad, I see no evidence that Pete was himself involved in those calls or even knew about them. There was nothing printed in the paper that spoke of him personally being aware that any funds he handled or gave over being promised or given for terrorist or revolutionary activities. I think, if anything it should be observed that he was possibly being used without his knowledge as a cover for whoever and whatever was really in charge of the distribution of those funds. Pete's basic philosophy I feel sure would not permit him to support any terrorist activity. I think it is probable he thought the money was going to help relieve poverty and hunger or some other basic need of the people involved. Not everyone in Chechnya is a terrorist after all. But many were and are suffering due to the struggles going on there.

Also, he came back here of his own volition. He was not captured or returned against his will. Pete must have believed and still does believe in his own innocence and the kind of democratic justice to be found here in the U.S.

I hope his belief in our country's justice will conclude in court with finding him innocent when an in depth analysis of Pete's intentions and activity is undertaken. Sincerely, Charu Colorado, 20 year resident and teacher in Ashland Oregon You have my permission to reprint and send this letter tto anyone who is interested in justice being done

On Nov 19, 2010, at 1:36 PM, gaiasong@mind.net wrote:

> Dear Charu,  
> Pete needs our community help with a letter immediately. Please do  
> if you  
> can.  
> Thanks, Carol  
>

Gerry Cavanaugh We would like to be there but can't make it. We...

11/19/2010 04:43:47 PM

From: Gerry Cavanaugh <gjcav@jeffnet.org>  
To: Joseph Lee <Joseph\_Lee@fd.org>  
Date: 11/19/2010 04:43 PM  
Subject: Re: Sentencing hearing for Pete Seda reminder

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We would like to be there but can't make it.  
We are hoping for the best.  
Good luck.  
Gerry and Ragan  
On Nov 19, 2010, at 1:01 PM, Joseph Lee wrote:

From: David Zaslow <shalomrav@aol.com>  
To: Joseph Lee <Joseph\_Lee@fd.org>  
Date: 11/20/2010 09:07 PM  
Subject: Letter to the Honorable Judge Hogan

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Rabbi David Zaslow  
692 Elkader Street  
Ashland, Oregon 97520

To: Judge Hogan  
Re: Pete Seda sentencing  
Date: November 20, 2010

Dear Honorable Judge Hogan:

There is no excuse for Mr. Seda's conviction regarding tax evasion and money laundering. But whatever discretion you have regarding sentencing I hope you will offer Mr. Seda as light a sentence as the law allows. I am certain he is not a danger to our society, and I believe he will be a more productive, tax paying citizen outside of prison than inside. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at 541-621-0782.

Thank you and shalom,  
Rabbi David Zaslow

Havurah Shir Hadash Synagogue  
Ashland, Oregon

Havurah Shir Hadash  
חבורת שיר חדש  
P.O. Box 1262  
Ashland, OR 97520



To: Judge Thomas Coffin  
Re: Pete Seda  
Date: August 14, 2007  
From: Rabbi David Zaslow  
Havurah Shir Hadash Synagogue  
www.havurahshirhadash.org  
(541) 621-0782

Dear Judge Coffin:

I have been the rabbi and spiritual leader of one of the three synagogues in Ashland, Oregon since 1995, and have known Pete Seda since the early days of my rabbinic studies in the late 1980's. I realize the task before you today is to assess if Mr. Seda is a flight risk, and if he might pose any danger to the community if he is free on bail.

I can tell you unconditionally that Mr. Seda would not have returned to face our judicial system if he were a flight risk, and I unconditionally believe that he will pose no danger whatsoever if you permit him to be free on bail while he prepares for his trial.

From the time I was ordained until several years after September 11, 2001 Pete Seda was my peace partner in bringing a bit of hope to both the Jewish and Muslim communities of southern Oregon. He spoke passionately against violence, Islamic terrorism, and for reconciliation with the Jewish community. He took some personal risk not only to associate himself with the Jewish community here, but to proclaim a very positive, public view about Israel.

I do not write these words lightly. In regard to the charges I have no personal knowledge of Pete's guilt or innocence. I am a strong supporter of our nation's War on Terrorism, and our alliance with Israel. At the same time, it was Muslim-American leaders like Pete Seda who were able to bring a measure of comfort and hope to communities across American after September 11. I have absolutely no doubt that Pete Seda will be a model citizen as he awaits trial should you grant his bail request.

Please do not hesitate to call me on my cell phone at the number above if you have any questions whatsoever.

Sincerely,  
Rabbi David Zaslow

November 22, 2010

Dear Judge Hogan,

I am writing this letter for Pete Seda. I would hope that while considering the sentence for him, you keep in mind he is a loving father and a vital member to the community. I accept the jury's decision, but I have a hard time believing he is a terrorist. It just doesn't match up to the Pete Seda I know.

I have been a public school teacher for 27 years and a father for 23 years. I had Pete's son, Jonah, in my class. I know Pete to be a loving father, and I know he came back from wherever he was because he was worried about his son. As a father, I would hope that I would have as much courage as Pete has shown in coming back; especially knowing the consequences that coming back to the United States would have to him.

I testified in the trial and acted as a character witness for Pete. There was something I didn't say that I wish I would have. I wanted to tell a story about Pete and the Ashland community during a time of crisis. When Ashland suffered from the floods of 1997, the city water was contaminated and the city was without drinking water. People were told they couldn't use their water period because the system was broken, so the citizens had to buy bottled water and use outhouses provided by the city. I can remember one store in particular that raised the price of bottled water. There were other stores that sold the water at cost. I quit shopping at the store that raised their prices. The point is, during hard times you get to know another side of people, in my opinion, a more authentic side. During that time, Pete showed me a side of him that I still admire. Pete's company was the Arborist and he had a big water truck with the Arborist painted on the side. The Arborist truck was everywhere delivering water to the community from sun up until sundown. He drove that truck all over the city making sure that people had water. He stopped his business and helped a broken community. It is this reason that I have a hard time believing that Pete Seda is a terrorist.

Pete also worked with my class on educating us about Islam. You heard my testimony on the stand, so I won't bother you with that. I would hope that you would take into consideration that Pete is not a dangerous man, but a man who loves his son and community.

Thanks for taking the time in reading this.

Sincerely,

Bill Gabriel  
Ashland resident  
Social Studies Dept. Chair  
Ashland High School

Caren Caldwell, M. Div.  
124 Ohio Street, Ashland, Oregon 97520

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November 19, 2010

The Honorable Judge Michael R. Hogan  
U.S. District Court  
405 East Eighth Avenue  
Eugene OR 97401

Dear Sir,

I write in support of Pete Seda whose sentencing hearing is scheduled for the morning of Tuesday, Nov. 23. I ask that he be returned to the community because he is neither a danger to society nor a person who hides any part of his personality.

I have known Pete for nearly 25 years as an Ashland resident and the previous minister of the Ashland United Church of Christ where Pete once rented space to hold weekly religious services for local Muslims. Pete's attitudes, his actions, and his commitment to his faith have remained wholly consistent throughout the period of our acquaintance.

I am sorry to hear from the trial record that he made a muddle of his finances. I commiserate with him because I've messed up my finances a few times myself. Financial matters are not a talent of mine. Certainly, if Pete owes taxes, he should be required to pay back any amount he owes to the IRS, but imprisonment would provide no corrective in this matter.

As a Christian minister, I find I hold much in common with Pete in regards to his religious frame of mind. I understand his desire to share his faith, to do works of charity, to reach out to the downtrodden. I understand his customary practice of prayer and study as he seeks to stay close to God. I understand his commitment to the ideals of peace, non-violence and justice as he looks at the world and its problems. And, yes, I understand the impulse to accept donations that allow one to extend one's religious witness.

All of Pete's religious traits are ones that I and millions of other Christians share. We, too, send holy books to prisoners. We, too, donate to those who suffer under tyranny and oppression from autocratic powers. We, too, set up foundations to keep our ministries viable. None of these actions rise to the level of illegality let alone terrorism. Religious people of every faith participate in all of these activities daily.

Pete cannot be seen as a flight risk because he returned from overseas and surrendered himself of his volition in order to clear his name. He has family in Portland, supporters in Ashland, and friends throughout Oregon.

I pray that Pete's sentencing hearing will highlight reason and perspective that allows all of us to maintain our faith in our legal system.

Sincerely,  
Rev. Caren Caldwell

To: Judge Hogan  
From: Carol Hwoschinsky

Date: November 18, 2010

I was unable to testify at the trial of Pete Seda and would like to offer some thoughts on his behalf.

I am a psychotherapist and communications educator and have worked in many places of conflict in the world, including Israel/Palestine where I brought Israelis and Palestinians together for dialogue.

Pete and I had several meetings in Ashland where we engaged in community dialogue. Pete shared with me his plans to enter Palestine to distribute humanitarian supplies. He also spoke of his time in Chechnya when he was doing the same thing.

I don't think many Americans realize that even Hamas started as a humanitarian organization. In Palestine they were responsible for building and operating elementary schools, hospitals and clinics which served the population. Many terrorist organizations have their roots in providing humanitarian and educational needs. The United Nations efforts did not adequately serve the whole populations. I strongly believe this was always Pete's intent.

Pete Seda is a humanitarian. He cares about community. He is not a bitter man. His faith sustains him. He is not a fundamentalist, but is a rational, caring and cooperative individual and loving parent to two fine boys.

I urge you to take these remarks into consideration as you consider Pete's sentence.

Sincerely,  
Carol Hwoschinsky  
443 Strawberry Lane  
Ashland, OR 97520



From: mary ann jones <blj\_maj@yahoo.com>  
To: joseph\_lee@fd.org  
Date: 11/18/2010 12:37 PM  
Subject: Letter to Judge Hogan

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2295 Tolman Creek Rd.  
Ashland, Oregon  
November 18, 2010

To: the Honorable Michael Hogan  
United States District Court  
Eugene, Oregon

Dear Judge Hogan,

I am well aware of the September trial of Pirouz Sedaghaty and the testimony given then, which resulted in a finding of guilty by the jury.

Mr. Sedaghaty has been a family friend for at least fifteen years, and I have witnessed his generous nature and his concern for other people. He is a person who could definitely contribute to the community around him, if given the opportunity.

I believe that he in no way would be a danger to anyone, and that he would responsibly and diligently carry out positive actions assigned to him, actions that would benefit society. I believe that our country would be far better served by allowing Mr. Sedaghaty this option, rather than his having to serve more time in prison.

It is my hope that you will take this into consideration during his sentencing.

Very truly yours,  
(Ms.) Mary Ann Jones



November 19, 2010

The Honorable Judge Michael R. Hogan  
U.S. District Court  
405 East Eighth Avenue  
Eugene OR 97401

RE: PETE SEDA SENTENCING

Dear Judge Hogan:

I worked with Mr. Seda for over nine years. I owned and operated a secretarial service in Ashland, and he contacted me for the first time in 1995 to help him create documents for his arborist business. Later he also brought work for the Quran Foundation, and later yet, material for Al-Haramain. Pete and I spent many hours over the phone or in person working out the words that would best express what he wanted to say.

I am not a Muslim, and there are many things in the religion I take issue with. He knew this. Even so, he brought me *Islam Is...* to work on. Together we reviewed each sentence, paragraph, section. We sometimes got sidetracked and broke out into outright argument over the principles he was trying to explain to his Western audience. Even when we stridently differed, he was deeply respectful. In fact, these were some of the most rousing arguments on religion I've had. Unlike those with some fundamentalist Christians in my own family, I never had the sense of my own view being rejected and smothered with "the truth." One of the things he loved most about this country was the ability of individuals with different views to co-exist in peace.

This is not a man with two hearts. Pete has one heart, a heart of service. During the 1997 flood in Ashland, he brought my family water. When I was sick with a fever and had to miss an appointment, he brought over homemade soup. When he saw two of my trees ailing, he told me what they needed. He always asked after my family's health. And when it was time to put in words what he believed, he did so openly, animatedly, and respectfully.

I understand the charges against him and that he was found guilty. Having worked with him during that time, I know the man I argued with—he is no terrorist. I ask for a light sentence. We, his community, would like him back.

Respectfully,

Patricia Florin  
3433 Cedar Flat Road  
Williams OR 97544